

Remarks

In the non-final Office Action mailed June 16, 2004 ("the Office Action"), the United States Patent and Trademark Office ("the Patent Office") stated that claims 1-12 are pending in the patent application, that claims 1-3 and 6-12 are rejected, and that claims 4 and 5 are objected to. The Patent Office accepted the drawings filed on January 16, 2001. Claims 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, and 9-12 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e). Claim 8 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a). Claims 4 and 5 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim. Claims 1-3 and 7-12 have been cancelled, claims 4-6 have been amended, and claim 13 has been added.

Rejection of Pending Claims 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, and 9-12 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e):

In the Office Action, the Patent Office rejected pending claims 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, and 9-12 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,744,821 (Van Acker *et al.*).

While not acceding to the Patent Office's allegations regarding claims 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, and 9-12, the claims have been cancelled or amended merely to expedite prosecution of the present patent application. The amendments are made without prejudice to future prosecution, without disclaimer of any subject matter, and without presumption that the actions are taken for any reason related to patentability.

In view of the foregoing, the applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, and 9-12 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e).

Rejection of Pending Claim 8 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a):

In the Office Action, the Patent Office rejected pending claim 8 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,744,821 (Van Acker *et al.*) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,252,902 (Simeon *et al.*).

Without acceding to the allegations of the Patent Office, claim 8 has been cancelled merely to expedite prosecution of the present patent application. The amendments are made without prejudice to future prosecution, without disclaimer of any subject matter, and without presumption that the actions are taken for any reason related to patentability.

In view of the foregoing, the applicant respectfully requests withdrawal of the rejection of claim 8 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

Objection to Pending Claims 4 and 5:

In the Office Action, the Patent Office objected to pending claims 4 and 5 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim. The Patent Office stated that claims 4 and 5 would be allowable if re-written in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Without acceding to the Patent Office's allegations regarding the base claim and any intervening claims, claims 4, 5, and 6 have been amended merely to expedite prosecution of the present patent application. The amendments are made without prejudice to future prosecution, without disclaimer of any subject matter, and without presumption that the actions are taken for any reason related to patentability.


In view of the foregoing, the applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the objection to claims 4 and 5.

Conclusion

The applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of the claims in view of the remarks and amendments above. The amendments are made merely to expedite prosecution of the present patent application and are made without prejudice to future prosecution, without disclaimer of any subject matter, and without presumption that the actions are taken for any reason related to patentability. The applicant urges the Patent Office to contact the applicant's representative at 312 913 2117, if the Patent Office believes such contact would expedite prosecution of the present patent application. The Commissioner is authorized to debit or credit Deposit Account No. 13-2490 for any fees underpaid or overpaid, respectively. The applicant respectfully asserts that the pending claims are allowable and requests prompt issuance of a Notice of Allowability as well as a Notice of Allowance and Issue Fee Due

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Respectfully submitted,



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